

The King died in the course of the night, and Queen Victoria began that long reign in which Disraeli himself was to be so conspicuous a figure. By eleven o'clock the following morning her first council was assembled.

I accompanied Lord Lyndhurst to Kensington Palace, when, on the accession of the Queen, the peers and privy councillors and chief personages of the realm pledged their fealty to their new Sovereign. He was greatly affected by the unusual scene: a youthful maiden receiving the homage of her subjects, most of them illustrious, in a palace in a garden, and all with a sweet and natural dignity. He gave me, as we drove home, an animated picture of what had occurred in the presence chamber, marked by all that penetrating observation, and happy terseness of description, which distinguished him. Eight years afterwards, with my memory still under the influence of his effective narrative, I reproduced the scene in *Sybil*, and I feel sure it may be referred to for its historical accuracy.¹

Throughout the session the Whig Government had been tottering to its fall, but a political struggle was now precipitated, as in those days the death of the Sovereign rendered a dissolution necessary.

To Sarah Disraeli.

CAHLTON
CLUB,.

[June
e
20.]

DEAREST,

I write in the midst of three or four hundred persons and in a scene of great excitement.

The battle now approaches; what will be my fate I pretend not to foresee. They tell me Ashburton is safe and it has been offered me, but I have refused it, as I should have had to leave town to-night. I suppose in the course of two or three days I shall be able to speak more definitely.

Lord Lyndhurst attended the Priyy Council at Kensington and kissed the young Queen's hand, which all agreed was remarkably sweet and soft. She read her address well and was perfectly composed though alone in the council chamber and attended by no women.

K

¹ General Preface to the Novels, 1870.